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Letter dated 18 July 2013 from the Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

In my capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, I have the honour to submit my report on my visit to Burundi from 24 to 28 June 2013. The trip was part of the regular engagement of the Commission with Burundi and was intended, specifically, to follow up on the Burundi Partners' conference, which took place on 29 and 30 October 2012 in Geneva, to discuss with the Government of Burundi the next steps in the Commission's engagement and to prepare my briefing for the Security Council on 22 July.

It is my overall impression that the country, while continuing to face important challenges, is making progress. On the one hand, I noted a new momentum generated by the outcomes and the spirit of the two workshops on the elections held in March (in Bujumbura) and May (in Kayanza). On the other hand, I felt signs of disappointment, stemming, in particular, from the recently adopted law on the media and the consequences of the fragile economy. In addition, my visit took place at a time when the work of the National Commission on Land and Other Assets was provoking some controversy. I noticed that different stakeholders have divergent opinions on the way the current chair of the National Commission is tackling this complex and politically sensitive issue. Given the significance of land ownership in Burundi, this matter is relevant from a peacebuilding perspective. I left Bujumbura with a feeling that the momentum created by the Geneva Conference of October 2012 needs to be revived in order to avoid the risk of a loss of trust developing between the Government and some of its main partners.

Following my visit to Burundi, I reiterate herein the following recommendations, which I reflected in my meetings with the key Burundian authorities:

(a) Translate the consensus from the Kayanza workshop into the new electoral code as a sign of confidence in the creation of a genuine democratic, open and fair political environment in view of the 2015 elections;

(b) Implement the new law on the media in a liberal fashion, upholding the fundamental liberty of expression at all times;

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(c) See to it that the upcoming laws on public demonstrations and on non-profit organizations are equally liberal and uphold international human rights standards;

(d) Implement the second poverty reduction strategy, in the Geneva spirit of mutual engagement, and prioritize and concretize its main components, especially in the framework of the follow-up conferences;

(e) Support the recommendations of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in view of improving the State's fiscal situation.

I recommend that the Burundi configuration and international partners in general stay engaged and communicate consistently with the Government and, more specifically:

(f) Follow attentively the implementation of the law on the media and the elaboration of other laws that are in the pipeline;

(g) Continue to monitor developments regarding the land issue and further engage with the National Commission on Land and Other Assets;

(h) Encourage the Government to continue its efforts to deal with the past by taking into account the results of the national consultations;

(i) Continue to support Burundi in the spirit of the mutual engagements adopted in Geneva and translate the pledges into concrete aid programmes;

(j) Encourage Government authorities to follow up on the recommendations of the International Monetary Fund.

My main message to other Burundian stakeholders is to continue to engage with the Government in a positive and constructive manner.

I would like to reiterate my gratitude to the Government of Burundi for once again facilitating the visit and for its continued excellent cooperation. I also warmly thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, and the staff of the United Nations Office in Burundi (BNUB) and the Peacebuilding Support Office for their careful preparations and helpful assistance. The role of BNUB and of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General is particularly important from a peacebuilding perspective, and both parties have provided me with great assistance in fulfilling my role as an advocate for Burundi. I strongly recommend their continued presence until the election in 2015.

I remain at your disposal to provide further information and clarifications, as may be required by the members of the Security Council. The Burundi configuration will continue to monitor the situation and keep the Council informed on developments relating to the peacebuilding priorities agreed between the Government of Burundi and the Peacebuilding Commission.

(*Signed*) Paul R. **Seger**
Chair
Peacebuilding Commission
Burundi configuration